



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 23 February 2023**

### **Questions by the Public** **under Council Procedure Rule 15(1)**

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question. The order of the questions to be asked is as set out below and an officer will pass a microphone to the questioner when their name is called by the Mayor.
- Please note that following the response given by the Councillor, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- The total time allocated for questions will *normally* be limited to 20 minutes. For any question which cannot be dealt with at the meeting, a written answer will be provided, normally within one working week.

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
|   | From:          |
| 1 | Astrea Hurlock |
| 2 | Donald Iro     |
| 3 | Patrick Davies |



## COUNCIL MEETING – 23 February 2023

### Questions by the Public under Council Procedure Rule 15(1)

#### QUESTION 1

From: Astrea Hurlock

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Learney)

“I have read the adopted Carbon Neutrality Roadmap and note that the Council have set a district target of carbon neutrality by 2030 which is 20 years ahead of the statutory goal of 2050, on paper this looks virtuous, however on closer examination the report quotes that offsetting will be required via the purchase of carbon credits, at today’s market value that equates to £7.54 million pounds and across the 20 years this exceeds £150 million. To a council tax paying member of the public this is nonsensical, if the Council believes it has this money to spare in 2030 surely these funds would be better spent on projects to help us achieve net zero in our homes, alternatively would it not be more realistic to relax the target of 2030?”

#### Reply

“Thank you for your interest in the Carbon Neutrality Roadmap. It’s a hugely important document that provides the evidence base for our future carbon reduction strategy but, as was made clear at the public discussion of the Roadmap on January 16, it is not policy, but rather is the evidence base from which to develop our future carbon reduction strategy.

Indeed, the first recommendation of the roadmap on page 90 of the report states “offsetting credits is not currently featured in WCC policy”.

The Council’s offsetting policy was agreed on 25 January 2023 and is clear that the only role of offsetting is as one of the approaches for the council itself to become carbon neutral by 2024, although carbon emission reduction, carbon credits creation and carbon removal are given higher priority. It did not commit the council to any off-setting to achieve the 2030 district-wide goal. This is not and never has been the council’s policy.

Ms Hurlock is right however to identify that the mismatch in ambition between the City Council and National Government and we would add the County

Council to that list - is a matter of concern. Carbon emissions are the responsibility of a wide range of stakeholders which include the central government and county council, business (industrial and commercial), domestic and agricultural sectors.

It is the belief of this administration that the biggest challenge we face is climate change. Our area has an above average carbon footprint. We are seeing the direct impact of climate change locally with flash flooding, extreme temperatures and water shortages affecting our health, our homes and businesses, chalk streams and rivers and the unique countryside that make our district so special. As the Carbon Road Map itself says, limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C is still possible, but only if we act immediately.

In this context, the weak leadership and inadequate ambition of the government and county council is a very major issue. Our response cannot be to slow down our own plans. As we say in our council plan, we have to go greener, faster and we need the county and central government to do the same and will continue to work with them to make that happen.”



**Winchester**  
City Council

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**QUESTION 2**

From: Donald Iro

To: The Cabinet Member for Service Quality (Cllr Gordon-Smith)

“Can someone please explain why our public toilets across the district are in such a state? In our market towns like Bishops Waltham where I live they are disgusting and having been into the city centre and the park and ride, likewise they are filthy? I must also add the ones in the city centre are also very intimidating for residents with people hanging around outside.

What message is this sending to residents and visitors alike when our public facilities are in such a mess?”

**Reply**

“It is a high priority for this administration to fix the public toilets across our district.

Later in this meeting, we will be agreeing a budget that puts extra money into public toilets and the joint development of a plan with parish councils and other partners to ensure we have safe, clean, appropriately maintained and accessible public toilets right across the district.

This will build on the work that is already underway:

- Our cleaning contractor has been taken to task for the issues we had been having. A new team has now been recruited and are actively working to deliver the requirements of the cleaning contract. We have amended cleaning schedules of the toilets to ensure the most used toilets have more frequent cleaning. We now require our cleaning contractor to provide date and time marked photos after each clean so we can ensure that they are being cleaned properly.

- We have employed an energetic and effective street scene officer. Part of his role is to monitor the condition and cleaning of public toilets. The council is also preparing to retender its cleaning contract at the end of this year and cleaning schedules will be considered as part of this process along with any associated but issues.
- We have sought advice from the British Toilet Association, who have provided the council with basis for an improvement strategy.
- We have tasked consultant building surveyors to review all our current buildings, including a list of all current defects, both of the interior fittings and the building structures.
- The Estates department has developed from the condition report a costed programme of works. These are divided as follows: Priority 1 is works to bring the toilets up to good working order and a reasonable standard. Priority 2 is work to substantially improve them and to ensure they match current best practice.
- The Council's Parking & Access Improvement Plan has also allocated funding to refurbish and improve the Chesil Street and Worthy Lane car park toilets. And in some places that work is already underway.
- The toilets in Alresford were reopened just before Christmas following refurbishment.
- A new temporary, but substantial brick clad toilet is to be opened in River Park by Easter.

Obviously, we also don't want people to feel too intimidated to use our toilets. Unfortunately, one of our biggest challenges is dealing with anti-social behaviour and misuse of the facilities. A lot of maintenance and cleanliness issues are caused by anti-social behaviour, vandalism and misuse.

While more frequent cleaning schedules can help, it's not a problem we can solve on our own and so officers across the whole council have been working hard with our CCTV contractors and the Business Improvement District and Hampshire Constabulary to identify perpetrators and make appropriate interventions to reduce the problem."



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**QUESTION 3**

From: Patrick Davies

To: The Leader (Cllr Tod)

“Why was the meeting of the Council’s Standards Sub-Committee on 27 January 2023 held in private to determine complaints about the conduct of a City Councillor, despite the Council’s rules (paragraph 7.1.2) stating clearly that this should have been a public hearing?”

**Reply**

“The Meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee that took place on 27th January 2023 was not a Hearing about a City Councillor and was in fact the consideration of the report written by external lawyers on an investigation concerning complaints relating to Denmead Parish Council. The Wider Findings and Recommendations together with the Conclusion from the report has been placed in the public domain by way of a report to Audit and Governance Committee published yesterday. A letter has been sent to Cllr Paula Langford-Smith, Chairman of Denmead Parish Council highlighting the requirement for the parish council to produce and implement an action plan to tackle the specific matters drawn out by the investigation.

The report made clear that no-one involved with Denmead Parish Council, whether officer or member, can consider themselves beyond reproach in the context of matters that have taken place at Denmead Parish Council, the need for changes to the cultural and organisational ethos of the council and that the status quo is not an option. To quote the recommendations “the audio/video of the meetings shows quite clearly how the behaviour was at times unacceptable”.

Because of the nature of the complaints and the resulting investigation, the Meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee went into exempt session in accordance with Section 100 (Part 1), Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of paragraphs 1 and 2, for reason of Information relating to any individual and Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.”